

# Higher Education Chancellor Presents Legislative Agenda at SWOSU

12.16.2014

With the demand for employees who have certificates and degrees continually increasing, college completion remains the top priority in the state of Oklahoma. That was the message delivered by Chancellor Glen D. Johnson as he presented the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's 2015 legislative agenda to an audience of lawmakers, community leaders and educators at Southwestern Oklahoma State University on December 16.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently voted to request \$98.7 million in new state appropriations during the upcoming legislative session. The total budget request for FY 2016 is 9.99 percent higher than the current year's appropriation.

"Oklahoma's higher education system remains committed to producing a quality, educated workforce, which strengthens our state economy," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "We have exceeded our Complete College America degree completion goals to date, and we know that meeting our ultimate degree completion goal will be a marathon, not a sprint. These additional funds would empower our institutions to continue achieving those degree completion benchmarks as we work toward a 67 percent increase in the number of degrees and certificates earned by 2023."

Increased financial aid funding will also be a priority for the State Regents in the upcoming legislative session. The State Regents are seeking \$1.2 million for the concurrent enrollment program, which provides tuition waivers to high school seniors who enroll in college coursework during their senior year.

The State Regents are also requesting an additional \$500,000 for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) initiatives, including the Summer Academies program, which provides interactive learning opportunities for Oklahoma eighth- through 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students in high-demand STEM disciplines.

The State Regents are seeking \$8.7 million for debt service obligations to complete the refinancing obligations undertaken in 2010 for the 2005 higher education capital bond issue.

The total appropriation request for FY 2016 is \$1.086 billion.

In addition to representatives from SWOSU and city/community representatives from western Oklahoma cities, delegations from Northwestern Oklahoma State University and Panhandle State University attended the presentation on the SWOSU campus.